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To: Comprehensive Planning Committee
From: Anton Jerve
Date: October 5, 2011
Subject: Urban Agriculture Zoning Study

Background

The general increased interest in local food is a major factor for initiating the Urban Agriculture Zoning Study. This interest has been reflected in recent APA Conference sessions, publications and food planning initiatives such as Homegrown Minneapolis. Community gardens have been identified by neighborhood groups locally and nationally as a way to build community and deal with the foreclosure crisis and associated vacant properties. In Saint Paul, several factors have led to this initiation, including:

- In the process of completing a determination of similar use for farmers markets in 2005 the Planning Commission recognized the need for a better definition for "farmer's market" and recommended further study to develop a more precise definition.

- In 2009, the City Council, at the initiation of Councilmember Stark, passed a resolution requesting "necessary changes to City policy (including possible zoning, licensing/permitting, HRA/easement polices)" in order to "facilitate a network of resources to support the production, distribution and consumption of healthy and locally grown food." Since the resolution, staff has been working on revising the HRA gardening lease guidelines, which are currently under review by the City Attorney's office. Staff has identified this study as the next step to respond to the resolution.

- The North End Urban Farm project by Sparc, a three acre parcel with several large garden plots and limited on-site sales does not fit into a specific zoning category. This use is proposed to be temporary but the long-term vision for the site is to have some portion of agricultural use as an amenity to the neighborhood and housing proposed for the site. DSI issued a "statement of clarification" for the site determining the site is similar to a community garden which allowed it for the 2011 growing season. The statement identifies the imminent zoning study and recommends that agricultural related definitions and requirements be clarified prior to the 2012 growing season.

- Finally, the Saint Paul-Ramsey County Food and Nutrition Commission (www.co.ramsey.mn.us/ph/pc/food_and_nutrition_commission.htm), which was reestablished in 2010, has recently released draft policy recommendations for the City and County, several of which are related to zoning issues.

For these reasons, it is important to review the zoning code to ensure urban agriculture and associated uses are adequately represented and regulated.

Scope

The following issues and sections have been identified to be included in the study:

- Agricultural use permit
- Community gardens
- Home occupations
- Farmers markets
- Greenhouse
- Composting (Licensing)
- Aquaculture
- Accessory uses
- Hoop houses
- Greenhouses
- Animal processing
- Yards/landscaping

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Comprehensive Planning Committee forward the attached resolution initiating the zoning study to the Planning Commission with a recommendation for approval. Staff will draft report of proposed changes for Neighborhood Planning Committee review within the next 6-8 weeks. The intent is to have adopted zoning changes in place for the 2012 growing season.